

Emanuel Comino presented the case for the return of the Parthenon Marbles at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, in Hague

Emanuel J. Comino OAM founder and chairman of the International Organising Committee - Australia for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles (est. 1981) recently made history when he presented the case for the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, in the Hague, Netherlands.

Emanuel was invited to represent the Committee in the 7th International Law Seminar - entitled "Resolution of Cultural Property Disputes", held at the Peace Palace on 23 May, 2003.

The Seminar which drew global attention attracted acclaimed speakers and world experts on the issue of the return of illegally appropriated cultural property.

Emanuel advised the Seminar that "Lord Elgin's talking of the world's greatest single collection of classical Greek sculptures is probably the world's most celebrated

cultural property dispute".

In his opening address the Secretary General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration Tjaco T van de Hout, confirmed the global importance of the Parthenon Marbles, particularly amongst those concerned with the return of cultural property. He observed that "the Parthenon Marbles are on the lips of people around the world".

The International Organising Committee - Australia for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles is greatly honoured to have its work of the past 22 years acknowledged by such a prominent and important world body.

Seminars such as this continue to provide the Committee with opportunities to advance the struggle for return of the Parthenon Marbles. These events also make clear the extensive global support amongst many prominent world citizens.

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tural dispute.

Sydney man Emanuel Comino has been campaigning passionately for 32 years to have the artistic treasures known as the Parthenon Marbles returned to the Parthenon.

The Parthenon Marbles, also called the Elgin Marbles, are a series of more than 90 classical Greek sculptures works taken from the Parthenon by Britain's Lord Elgin, in the early 1800s, while Greece was under Turkish Rule.

Mr Comino, as founder and chairman International Organising Committee Australia for the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, has travelled to Europe, the United States, New Zealand and every state and Territory in Australia to make the world sit up and take notice.

He even took the case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands.

As a result of his tireless work, as many

as 15 countries have formed committees for the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles.

Humourously, Mr Comino said the Parthenon without the Marbles were "like a beautiful woman without teeth".

But spend half an hour or so with Mr Comino and you realise he is passionately devoted to this cause. It is no joke.

Mr Comino was first inspired to take up the fight for the return of these Greek artworks during a trip to Europe in 1976 when he saw just how many Greek artefacts were in foreign museums.

It stunned him. This artistic procurement by foreigners fired up his patriotic zeal and planted the seed of the restoration movement.

"My first idea was to get everything back, all Greek artefacts from all the museums," Mr Comino said.

"But in 1981 I realised that the most important thing was to get the Parthenon

Marbles back."

That's when the restoration committee was formed.

Mr Comino said the Marbles are "an integral part of Greek heritage and national identity".

"They represent the body and soul of Greece," he said.

Mr Comino pointed out several examples of how Greece was represented in media advertising and television news reports.

The Parthenon always had a prominent, identifiable place in the background.

To illustrate the importance the Parthenon has to Greeks, Mr Comino told the story of a battle during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1833). The ruling Turks were stationed at the Parthenon, besieged by the Greek forces.

Running out of ammunition they were

preparing to take the lead supports from the Parthenon columns to melt them down for bullets.

The Greeks were so horrified by this they offered to give the Turks their own bullets, rather than have the Parthenon desecrated.

Mr Comino said the three main points to remember in the acquisition of the Marbles were:

1. Greece was under Turkish rule when the Marbles were taken
2. It was an era when big, colonial powers took all they wanted and;
3. The dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean at the time was Britain.

Mr Comino said Greece was offering Britain a simple deal: "Give us back our Parthenon Marbles and we will replace them with exact copies. We will pay to take the Parthenon Marbles away and we will pay to deliver the copies".

"The world must understand the Parthenon is a noble symbol of excellence, the essence of Greekness, a tribute to Greek democracy and pride", Mr Comino said.

"No other architectural wonder of the world comes close.

"It's a supreme achievement of beauty".

Two legal factors in the Marbles saga are also in question.

Lord Elgin claimed that he received permission in the form of a "firman" (decree or mandate issued by the sovereign) from the Turkish government to take the Marbles.

The authenticity of the firman is in dispute. So if Lord Elgin had no permission to take them in the first place, from the ruling power of the day, the Turks, then what legal right does Britain have to keep them in their museum?

Secondly, there is confusion over whether the return of the Marbles would take an Act of Britain's parliament or a change in the museum's constitution. "This is no more than a British excuse".

It's almost as if the issue is a political hot potato that the British don't want to confront.

They are hoping it will just go away.

But with people like Emanuel Comino snapping at their heels, the issue will not go away - not until the Parthenon Marbles are back in their homeland, Greece.

Letter to the editor

"Racist Australia Day"

Australia Day, 2009 brought to memory the shameful Cronulla riots!

Once again racists (who call themselves genuine Australian citizens) gave an appalling example with their racist emblem as an emblem of racial hatred! SHAME!!!

It doesn't surprise me that these events once again took place during the country's National Day celebrations!

If racist actions, racial hatred displaying and other NON AUSTRALIAN behaviour is what the racist 'mob' of this country consider as National Day celebrations then truly they are shameful individuals who disgrace this country, the country they claim to belong to them alone!!!

It's one thing to be a proud Australian and another thing to be a racist citizen of Australia. As far as I'm concerned the racist 'mob' does not represent Australia!!! The "true" Australian is a citizen of

morals, good values, acceptance, a citizen with no prejudices who is proud of their country leave it!!!

How much longer, for how many more years yet must decent Australian citizens from all racial backgrounds, put up and tolerate the non - Australian attitude and behaviour of a bunch of welfare???

We are talking about a mob of people who have no morals or values!

Their only "values" is RACIAL, HATRED and ETHNIC CLEANSING!

Once again SHAME!

SHAME for the Australia Day racist parades such as those that took place in an area around Macquarie Fields.

Let us work towards building a "TRUE BLUE" Australia without racism, without these "shanani-gans" that take place every now and then!

Christos Christou

